



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Minority Communities

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (MHHD) compiled information on COVID-19 and minority communities.

Social determinants of health continue to exacerbate the effects of COVID-19 on minority communities. As defined by Healthy People 2020, social determinants of health are conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

COVID-19 will intensify the impact of social determinants of health on minority communities in several ways including:

- **Social Distancing:** While this is a critical tactic to stop the spread of the virus, the practice of social distancing can increase mental and emotional health challenges.
- **Housing Insecurity:** Lack of affordable housing coupled with issues of poverty, low income and loss of wages, can present challenges with monthly mortgage and rental payments. Also, the homeless population is at a high risk to the virus because of their inability to self-quarantine from the general population. Additionally, population density that is pervasive in low income neighborhoods can make it more difficult for residents to properly practice social distancing.
- **Food Insecurity:** Food deserts that are pervasive in poorer neighborhoods hamper access to essential groceries and provisions. Low income consumers are less likely to be able to afford healthy food options. With panic buying on certain items and lack of access to traditional supermarkets, residents without adequate transportation face challenges with traveling regionally to get essentials such as toilet paper, infant formula, and disease-specific nutrition.

Due to social determinants of health, minority populations have experienced a greater disruption to their lives during the COVID-19 crisis. As the virus continues to spread, higher rates of infection and fatality are linked to existing health disparities that affect minority communities, and particularly Black Americans. Higher rates of diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and asthma that are often associated with minority health, have led to higher mortality rates for COVID-19.

Facts about COVID-19 and Minorities

- Data has linked preexisting health conditions that are prevalent with minorities – such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma – to the infection by caused by COVID-19.
- Although the virus does not cause these chronic conditions, it exacerbates them (e.g. difficulty breathing), making these conditions more complicated to treat, especially among those 65 years and over.
- These health conditions are often categorized as being persistent health disparities or differences and are driven less by genetic factors and more by socio-economic factors and adverse living conditions.
- COVID-19 is not a result of the development and implementation of 5G technology.
- COVID-19 affects all races and ethnicities; there are no racial or ethnic groups that are immune to contracting the virus.